

Story 1966 (1992 Tape 4)

Narrator: Leyla Özdemir, 25

Location: Kırklareli, capital of  
Kırklareli Province (a  
Black Sea or Laz  
province)

Date: May 1992

The Drunken Laz<sup>1</sup> Saved from Being Crippled

A night watchman patrolling a city street observed a man walking with great awkwardness. The man was just hitching along slowly with one foot on the sidewalk and the other down on the street. As the watchman approached this badly limping man, he realized that the man was Temel.<sup>2</sup> He also realized that Temel was rather drunk.

The watchman asked Temel, “How many drinks did it take to make you so drunk?” Temel stopped and responded to the watchman’s question with a question of his own: “Are you sure that I am drunk?”

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<sup>1</sup>The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces, along the extreme eastern part of the Turkish Black Sea coast. More recently the word has come to be applied to any resident of the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. In the Turkish oral tradition Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept. This stereotype (like most others) is unjustifiable, for Lazes are, of course, much like other people.

<sup>2</sup>In tales about the stereotyped Laz as dummer or fool, the male characters usually have one or another of five or six very common Laz names. Temel is the name used most often, with Dursun in second place. Thus if either of these names occurs in a folktale, the audience knows at once that it is a Laz tale.

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The watchman stepped back and said, "Well, you have all the appearances of being drunk. In my judgment you are really quite drunk. Otherwise, why would half of you walk on the sidewalk and the other half in the street?"

When Temel heard this, he held his face between his hands and spoke with a choked voice. He said, "May Allah bless you! You have relieved me greatly. I thought that I had become seriously crippled!"